

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 DODE-00 CIAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8502
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
USLO PEKING PRIORITY
USMISSION USBERLIN PRIORITY
USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY
USNMR SHAPE PRIORITY
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
USDEL MBFR VIENNA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 08838

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MILITARY ADDRESSEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, PGOV, UR, GW
SUBJECT: BREZHNEV VISIT TO THE FRG

REF: BONN 8565 (DTG 091842Z MAY 78) (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: CHANCELLERY STATE MINISTER WISCHNEWSKI TOLD
ME HE WAS CONFIDENT THAT BERLIN IS IN FOR A PERIOD OF
RELATIVE QUIET FOLLOWING THE BREZHNEV VISIT. ON
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MBFR, WISCHNEWSKI SAID BREZHNEV HAD CHARACTERIZED
THE WESTERN INITIATIVE AS AN IMPROVEMENT BUT HAD
CLAIMED NATO WAS STILL SEEKING UNILATERAL CONCESSIONS.
BREZHNEV HAD ALSO SUGGESTED BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS
PRIOR TO THE NEXT ROUND IN VIENNA AND HAD ASSERTED THAT
PRESIDENT CARTER WAS MORE INTERESTED IN MBFR THAN IN
SALT. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING A TOUR D'HORIZON ON MAY 11, CHANCELLERY STATE MINISTER WISCHNEWSKI AND I TALKED AT LENGTH ABOUT THE BREZHNEV VISIT. AS MIGHT BE EXPECTED, WISCHNEWSKI, WHO WAS NOT A DIRECT PARTICIPANT IN THE VISIT BUT WHO DOES REFLECT SCHMIDT'S VIEWS, RENDERED A POSITIVE JUDGMENT.

2. ON BERLIN, WISCHNEWSKI THOUGHT THE VISIT HAD CREATED A CLIMATE WHICH WOULD RULE OUT "SERIOUS PROBLEMS" WITH THE SOVIETS OR THE GDR IN THE COMING MONTHS. SPECIFICALLY, HE DID NOT EXPECT THE SOVIETS TO RAISE SERIOUS OBJECTIONS TO MAYOR STOBBE'S ASSUMPTION OF THE BUNDESRAT PRESIDENCY. NOR DID HE EXPECT THE QUESTION OF BERLIN'S CONTINUED PARTICIPATION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TO BE A PROBLEM. HE SAID SCHMIDT HAD RAISED BOTH ISSUES WITH BREZHNEV AND THE SOVIET LEADER HAD NOT EXPRESSED ANY CONCERN.

3. WISCHNEWSKI CONFIRMED THAT BREZHNEV HAD BEEN DISPLEASED BY THE LIKELIHOOD THAT SCHMIDT WOULD ACCOMPANY QUEEN ELIZABETH AND PRESIDENT CARTER TO BERLIN. HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO WISCHNEWSKI, BREZHNEV HAD NOT INDICATED THAT THIS WOULD BE A PROBLEM. IN SUM, HE DID NOT SEE BERLIN AS A SOURCE OF DISCORD IN THE NEAR FUTURE. WISCHNEWSKI SAID THE GERMANS WERE STRUCK BY CONFIDENTIAL

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THE FACT THAT GROMYKO, WHO HAD TRADITIONALLY BEEN MORE NEGATIVE ON BERLIN THAN BREZHNEV, DID NOT DIVERGE FROM VIEWS EXPRESSED BY THE SOVIET LEADER.

4. WISCHNEWSKI ALSO READ PORTIONS OF THE MEMCON COVERING THE SCHMIDT-BREZHNEV CONVERSATIONS IN HAMBURG (PARAS 5-8 BELOW). MY EARLIER READOUT FROM BLECH--REFTEL--HAD COVERED MAINLY THE BONN DISCUSSIONS.

5. ON MBFR, BREZHNEV HAD VOICED DISMAY AT THE SLOW PACE OF DISCUSSIONS. THE WEST HAD "SOMEWHAT IMPROVED" ITS NEGOTIATING POSITION THROUGH THE APRIL INITIATIVE. HOWEVER, HIS INITIAL IMPRESSION WAS THAT NATO WAS STILL SEEKING UNILATERAL CONCESSIONS. NATO WANTED THE WARSAW PACT TO UNDERTAKE THREE TIMES THE REDUCTIONS THAT IT WAS WILLING TO MAKE ITSELF. THE PACT WAS OPPOSED TO THIS, SINCE THERE WAS ALREADY APPROXIMATE PARITY BETWEEN THE FORCES. BREZHNEV HAD SAID THE DATA DISCUSSIONS WERE SUPERFICIAL AND A WASTE OF TIME. THE SOVIETS WANTED MUTUAL REDUCTIONS. AS A FIRST STEP, BREZHNEV SUGGESTED THAT BOTH SIDES AGREE NOT TO INCREASE THEIR TROOP STRENGTH DURING THE VIENNA

TALKS. HE HAD ALSO RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS PRIOR TO THE START OF THE NEXT ROUND IN VIENNA. (IT WAS NOT TOTALLY CLEAR WHETHER BREZHNEV HAD REFERRED ONLY TO FRG-SOVIET BILATERALS OR TO

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CONSULTATIONS ON A WIDER SCOPE--THOUGH I WOULD ASSUME IT WAS THE FORMER.) CONCLUDING, BREZHNEV HAD EMPHASIZED THE SOVIET DESIRE TO BRING THE TALKS TO A POSITIVE END.

6. ACCORDING TO WISCHNEWSKI, SCHMIDT HAD NOT REPLIED TO BREZHNEV'S SUGGESTION OF CONSULTATIONS. THE CHANCELLOR HAD COMMENTED THAT HE ASSUMED THERE WOULD BE NO PROGRESS IN MBFR WITHOUT SUCCESS IN SALT II. BREZHNEV HAD INTERRUPTED TO SAY THAT PRESIDENT CARTER SAW THE RELATIONSHIP IN "EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE MANNER", I.E. MBFR FIRST SCHMIDT HAD THEN SAID IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS MORE

INTERESTED IN CONCLUDING A SALT AGREEMENT THOUGH HE
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WAS OBVIOUSLY VERY SERIOUS ABOUT MBFR AS WELL.

7. AT THIS POINT, GROMYKO HAD ENTERED THE DISCUSSION STATING THAT THE WEST WAS CALLING FOR UNFAIR REDUCTIONS BY THE WARSAW PACT. HE HAD ASSERTED THAT IT WOULD BE VERY DIFFICULT TO VERIFY NATO WITHDRAWAL OF TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS. NATO COULD EASILY WITHDRAW ROCKETS OF OLD VINTAGE AND REINTRODUCE THEM COVERTLY. SCHMIDT HAD NOTED THE WARSAW PACT'S THREE TO ONE TANK SUPERIORITY AND GROMYKO HAD REPLIED THAT "NO ONE HAD EVER COUNTED THEM" (THE TANKS) AND SOVIET STRENGTH WAS, IN ANY CASE, HIGHLY INFLATED BY THE WEST.

8. AGAIN READING FROM A PORTION OF THE HAMBURG MEMCON, WISCHNEWSKI BRIEFED ME ON BREZHNEV'S PRESENTATION ON CHINA. BREZHNEV HAD SAID PEKING WAS MASQUERADING AS A FRIEND OF EC COUNTRIES. IN FACT, PEKING'S PURPOSE WAS TO DESTROY DETENTE. THE CHINESE DESIRE TO ACQUIRE WESTERN TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE THEIR ALREADY SIZEABLE MILITARY POTENTIAL SHOULD BE SEEN IN THIS LIGHT. THE SOVIET UNION WAS AWARE THAT A GROWING NUMBER OF GERMAN FIRMS WERE INVOLVED IN ASSISTING THE CHINESE MILITARY INDUSTRY. THIS WAS A SOURCE OF CONCERN. BREZHNEV SAID HIS TRIP TO THE WESTERN SOVIET UNION HAD NOT BEEN A DEMONSTRATION AGAINST CHINA. THE CHINESE WERE AWARE THAT THE SOVIET UNION SINCERELY DESIRED TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS AND WAS NOT LOOKING FOR PROBLEMS.

9. IN CONTRAST TO BLECH AND HIS COLLEAGUES, WISCHNEWSKI SAID HE OFTEN HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT BREZHNEV WAS A FIGUREHEAD, MANIPULATED BY OTHER SOVIET LEADERS. HE WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO SAY WHO MIGHT
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COMPRISE THIS GROUP. AT THE SAME TIME, HE BELIEVED GROMYKO'S POSITION HAD BECOME CONSIDERABLY STRONGER IN RECENT YEARS. INDEED, SOME PEOPLE IN MOSCOW THOUGHT HE COULD BE BREZHNEV'S SUCCESSOR OR AT LEAST PART OF THE SUCCESSION TEAM. I DEMURRED ON THE FIRST POINT, NOTING THAT GROMYKO WAS A TECHNICIAN AND NOT A PARTY STALWART.- WISCHNEWSKI, WHO IS NOT AN EXPERT ON SOVIET AFFAIRS, WAS NOT CONVINCED SAYING THAT "OUR

PEOPLE IN MOSCOW" SEE GROMYKO'S POSITION AS MUCH
IMPROVED WITHIN THE PARTY AS WELL.

10. WISCHNEWSKI THEN TOLD THE FOLLOWING VIGNETTE ON
THE HAMBURG TALKS. DURING A RELAXED MOMENT AT
SCHMIDT'S HOME, BOTH SIDES BEGAN A SERIES OF TOASTS
(WITH JUICE RATHER THAN VODKA--TO BREZHNEV'S OBVIOUS
DISMAY.) AFTER TOASTING PEACE AND SCHMIDT, BREZHNEV
PROPOSED A TOAST TO "OUR FRIEND SUSLOV". THE SOVIET
DELEGATION HAD REACTED TO THE MENTION OF SUSLOV BY
ERUPTING INTO LOUD LAUGHTER. ONLY PATOLICHEV HAD NOT
JOINED IN THE GENERAL MERRIMENT BUT IT WAS SOON
DISCOVERED THAT HE HAD FALLEN ASLEEP. HE WAS
AWAKENED BY THE LAUGHTER AND TOLD OF BREZHNEV'S
TOAST. HE, TOO, IMMEDIATELY BURST INTO LAUGHTER.
WISCHNEWSKI SAID THE GERMANS INTERPRETED THIS AS AN
INDICATION THAT SUSLOV HAD OPPOSED THE BREZHNEV VISIT.
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